

Mr. & Mrs. Ronald R. Mead
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5094 '99 MAY 13 P1:41

May 7, 1999

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, Maryland 20852

RE: Docket #98N-1038, "Irradiation in the Production, Processing, and Handling of Food"

To whom it may concern:

The FDA should retain the current labeling law, the current terminology of "treated with radiation" or "treated by irradiation," and the use of the radura symbol on all irradiated whole foods.

Regarding the issue of labeling, in its initial petition, the FDA concluded that irradiation was a "material fact" about the processing of a food, and thus should be disclosed. The material fact remains, therefore, labeling should remain. Consumer acceptability, storage qualities, and nutrients are affected. Some irradiated foods have different texture and spoilage characteristics than untreated foods. Most fruits and vegetables have nutrient losses that are not obvious or expected by the consumer.

In addition, processing by irradiation causes chemical changes that are not evident and are potentially hazardous. Meat, for example, may have a higher level of carcinogenic benzene. All irradiated foods contain unique radiolytic products that have never been tested.

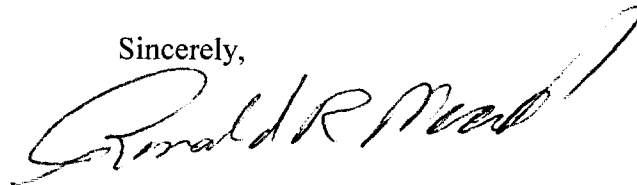
Whether or not the FDA has approved irradiation as safe, it remains a new technology with no long-term human feeding studies. Consumers certainly have a right to know if this process has been used on their food.

Regarding the kind of label used, we believe that the label should be large enough to be readily visible to the consumer, on the front of the package. The label contains important information regarding the processing of the contents. For displayed whole foods such as produce, a prominent informational display similar to the used for meats should be used that contains the term "irradiation" and the radura. Any phrase involving

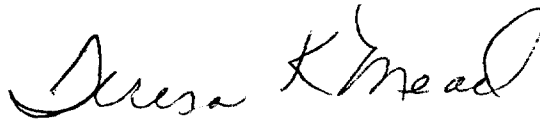
the word "pasteurization" is misleading because pasteurization is an entirely different process of rapid heating and cooling.

Because of the newness of the technology and the need to assess the public health effects of widespread use of irradiated foods, we believe the FDA's labeling requirement should not be permitted to expire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ronald R. Mead". The signature is fluid and extends to the right with a long, sweeping tail.

Ronald R. Mead

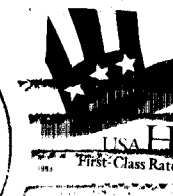
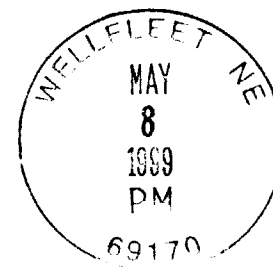
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Teresa K. Mead". The signature is more compact than the one above, with a clear "K" in the middle.

Teresa K. Mead

TKM/kks



Ron & Teresa Mead
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